Changing Expectations of Jewish Communal Professionals: A Panel

Editor's Note: *On February 10, 2009, the School of Jewish Communal Service convened a day-long symposium on "The Changing Landscape of Jewish Professional Leadership" in honor of the school's 40th anniversary. The final panel featured four prominent Los Angeles area Jewish professionals—representing different sectors of the field—reflecting on changes they have seen in the skill sets, training, and experience expected of Jewish communal professionals. Sally Weber addressed the issue from the perspective of social workers and the social service sector, John Fishel reflected on changes in the Federation world, and David Levy looked at the Hillel community. The moderator was Marla Eglash Abraham, former Interim Director of the SJCS and currently serving as Senior Vice President for Endowment Planning and Premier Philanthropy at the Los Angeles Jewish Federation. The following is an edited transcript of this session.*

MARLA EGLASH ABRAHAM

One of the interesting things about today's topic is that it could be understood in two different ways. What we are actually asking about today is how expectations of Jewish communal professionals have changed from the perspectives of their communities, organizations, and lay leaders. Another way we might have looked at the question, however, is this: how have the expectations of the field changed for Jewish communal professionals?

I want to share a conversation on this question that Steve Windmueller and I had some time over the last decade. We were talking about students and how they have changed over the years. Steven and I are both in the same generational cohort, the Baby Boomers, and we were talking about what life was like when we first entered the field. What we realized was that when Steven and I (and many of you in the room) entered the field, we were very willing to let the field shape our identity… whatever it took, whatever dues needed to be paid. What we saw over the last decade, however, were young Jewish communal professionals leaving school wanting to *shape the field* and wanting to *define themselves*. The equation went in an entirely different direction.

To help frame this discussion, let us look at some models of biblical leadership: Noah, Abraham, and Moses. As it turns out, they are wonderful case studies for today's panel.

Noah is perhaps the best representation of the great implementer, the great administrator. Those of us in fundraising recall what was known as the "campaign secretary" years of the '70s. What were the expectation of professionals then? Very simply: implementation. There was a very clear definition of the role, and there was not a lot of flexibility, nuance, or gray area. That was the black-and-white era of fundraising.

Abraham, by contrast, enters into a covenant with God as a partner. So we already have more of a balance of power. Abraham agrees to labor with God and creates a more balanced partnership arrangement. But rather than delve into these two models, I want to focus on Moses.

It happens that this week's *parsha* is Yitro. Many of you have used Yitro as the quintessential leadership text, but let me paint a little wider picture. In Yitro, we see Moses crumbling under the pressure of a vertical system (not even hierarchical) that has him as the sole leader. That's it; he handles everything. Enter his father-in-law Jethro, who is an outsider (those of us looking at mentor systems should remember that he came from outside the system). He pointed out that Moses was exhausted, that he could not do it all on his own: "You will surely wear yourself out and these people as well, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone." Unlike most sons-in-law, my husband included, he actually heeded his father-in-law's advice. Jethro gave Moses a blueprint for delegation, a leadership model that Eugene Borowitz has described as *tzimtzum* (retracting ourselves to allow others to develop their own leadership styles). I can imagine that if Jim Collins (author of *Good to Great*) were to have interacted with Moses back then, he would have probably said to him, "Stop driving the empty bus by yourself. Fill it up, fill it up fast, and get moving."

Yitro is filled with so much good material: the Ten Commandments are given, we enter into the covenant with God, and Moses as the leader represents the people Israel and begins the process of receiving and interpreting the revelation. This lays the groundwork in our tradition for the ongoing process of reinvention, reinvigoration, and redefinition, while at the same time also holding onto our core values.

With this as a preface, let me introduce the panelists and ask them to share their insights and interpretations.

Sally Weber, LCSW, is Director of Jewish Community Programs at Jewish Family Services in Los Angeles. I have known Sally for years, because she was my roommate's field instructor while I was studying at HUC. She was also a substitute professor for Jerry Bubis and for years has taught the Pastoral Counseling course in the Rabbinical School. She is a recipient of the Jewish Community Professionals of Southern California (JCPSC) Career Achievement award and the Micah Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement from the Jewish Federation. One of the most important things Sally has taught me over the years is, with regard to my family, that it doesn't matter what you have for Shabbat dinner, as long as you have it together.

John Fishel is the president and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, a post he has held since 1992. Prior to that, he was the executive at the Montreal Federation in Canada, and before that was their planning director. Before that, he had a career with HIAS and the Federation of Greater Philadelphia. He has a bachelor's degree in Anthropology and a Masters in Social Welfare Administration from the University of Michigan. The most interesting thing that you wouldn't know about John is that he used to promote rock concerts.

Last, but certainly never least, is David Levy. David is an alumnus of HUC's School of Jewish Communal Service, as well as USC's School of Social Work in 1987. David just joined the Community Relations Department at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center where he is responsible for leading the team working with the Medical Center's Board of Directors. Prior to that, he was director of the LA Hillel Council, which is the umbrella organization for all Southern California Hillels. And before that, he was associate executive director of the Jewish Federation Valley

Alliance and director of Los Angeles Jewish Aid Services, which at the time was also part of JFS.

SALLY WEBER

My training was not in the field of Jewish communal service; my own background was in the civil rights movement and grassroots organizing. When I was in social work school, there was not a formal field of Jewish communal service; I got my MSW in 1968, a year before SJCS started. I came to this field unexpectedly, because of the blending of my personal and professional interests. As my own Jewish life expanded, my interest in working in the Jewish community grew concurrently. I also came to it because of the support of my two mentors—Jerry Bubis, who first formally brought me into this field and this school through an invitation to teach in his class, "The Jewish Components of Community Practice," and my late husband, Jerry Weber.

I have been part of Jewish communal professional life in Los Angeles for a very long time, starting with Jerry's work as the director of the Council on Jewish Life at the Jewish Federation. I have been a field instructor for HUC students pretty consistently since 1981, on top of the wonderful opportunities I have had to teach at SJCS. I have also been a school social worker, a synagogue program director, a social worker in private practice, and a synagogue program consultant; for the last 20 years, I have been at Jewish Family Service.

I have seen enormous changes in the field, and especially in the expectations of Jewish communal service workers in social service settings, many of which parallel changes in the field of social work, some which parallel the shift that occurred as we moved from sectarian to nonsectarian agencies. All of these shifts ultimately focus attention on what the field of Jewish communal service means today, where and how it is relevant to our work, and how it has been redefined or needs to be redefined.

In the early days of this field, the primary academic credential for entry was the MSW. My late husband was an MSW; Ted Kanner, who was the executive director of the Federation at the time, was also an MSW. This was the field that best prepared professionals for work in the world of social services because it held a broad perspective of the interplay among environment, politics, social welfare, and the individual. Directors of Jewish communal agencies—JCCs, Federations, family service agencies—came from the field of social work. There was a common language, shared skills, a certain professional worldview that arose from that common training.

Most social work students were interested in clinical work. Even those who received double masters degrees often aspired to go into private practice (something that always intrigued me). It was a rarity to find students specializing in COPA (Community Organization, Planning and Administration)—and as much of a rarity for them to find employment in this area. This usually resulted in their taking clinical or case management positions, to work their way up the ladder in social service agencies into management.

For double masters students, there was a desire to work in the Jewish community, but what this meant was sometimes rather vague. While for some it meant aspiring to professional leadership roles in Jewish agencies, for most of my students it meant being able to work in their comfort zone—with Jewish clients

and Jewish colleagues. The communal service degree for clinicians was value-added, but not necessarily indicative of a leadership role they wanted to play in the community. This is something I believe has changed, especially recently.

Another change is that Jewish social service agencies were once Jewish, meaning sectarian, and now most are nonsectarian. While being a Jewish communal professional in a Jewish setting can present its own identity challenges, being one in a Jewish nonsectarian agency is infinitely more complicated. How do we interpret the meaning of being an agency based in Jewish ethics and values in a setting that serves an enormously diverse clientele and employs staff from diverse backgrounds? How do we do it in a way that does not jeopardize government funding but still upholds the Jewish integrity of our setting? What IS the Jewish integrity of our setting?

And the most dramatic changes have come as the challenges of competition and finances move us more and more to corporate and entrepreneurial models. As social workers, we are historically focused on process. The new model is increasingly focused on the bottom line.

These trends have already precipitated a change in the direction of training. A core in the early days of the SJCS was the dual degree with USC's School of Social Work. Now there are similar degree programs with the Masters in Business Administration, Masters in Communications Management, and Masters in Public Administration. I know there is a reconsideration of the dual degree program in social work, emphasizing the COPA concentration and deemphasizing the clinical orientation.

What is expected of the social worker in our settings today? I asked some colleagues in the field what they thought, and they said that the biggest change is that, in social work language, there has been a major shift in focus from process to content, an increasing focus on the bottom line. One colleague said, "I went into the field to do good social work, to serve the community. Now I'm directing an entrepreneurial, fee-for-service program that requires a focus on financial skills, productivity, knowledge of business models." Another said, "My dad was upset I wanted to be a social worker, a 'do-gooder.' I sure didn't want to be a businessperson like he was. But now I can't be an effective social worker without MBA skills in fundraising, administration, and marketing. I wasn't prepared for this." And a third commented, "I got a double masters at a time when the 'J' was brought into the core of everything learned. The guiding question in my school was 'what are you walking into the room with as a Jewish communal professional?' That's not part of the job description in Jewish agencies any longer. It's not a question I would automatically ask any job applicant."

There is—and if there isn't, there should be—ongoing dialogue in all our social service agencies about what it means to be an agency based on Jewish values and ethics that serves a diverse population, usually with very diverse staff and in very diverse locations. At Jewish Family Service, I staff the "J in JFS Committee," a committee of the board that is charged with maintaining a focus on our Jewish mission—be it figuring out how to interpret the meaning of our mission to diverse staff and clients or how to maintain and strengthen our relationship with the Jewish community without "risking" our nonsectarian status. We are a nonsectarian agency; a very small portion of our income comes from Jewish sources (I think 12–13% of our budget comes from the Jewish Federation). But

we are a Jewish agency, which means that our mission is strongly tied to the Jewish values and core ethics we have as Jews. Our challenge is that we serve a diverse community and we have a very diverse staff. We spend a lot of time on this committee in dialogue about what it means to be based on these values, how to communicate the importance of being a Jewish agency founded on these values and ethics to both our staff and to our clients. We have a homeless shelter that historically has not served Jewish clients, or a very small number of Jewish clients, because a member of our Board of Directors said, "This is what, as Jews, we are supposed to be doing." This is a crucial dialogue that needs to take place at this level in all of our agencies. Each of our Jewish agencies that claims roots in Jewish values and ethics should have a committee that looks at the core part of their mission to continue to define and redefine what it means to be a social service agency in changing times.

There is a specific challenge in this for JCPSC. Clinicians have rarely related to this professional organization. Even social service managers find it a stretch because, again, the thrust of the professional association does not seem to be related to social services and the needs of social workers in the more traditional definition of our field. We need to find a way to define the value-added for social service professionals to identify as a member of the Jewish communal profession. I certainly listened with interest to the presentation on the JCPSC *Brit Miktzoah*, the Covenant of Jewish Professional Leadership (see the article by Marsha Katz Rothpan in this issue). I suspect most clinicians would have a very difficult time relating to most of it; it would be interesting and important to share this document with focus groups of those professionals to see what parts they relate to and what parts they don't relate to and what has particular relevance for them in 2009.

And a new challenge today is, Do you have to work in the Jewish community to be a Jewish communal professional? With shrinking job markets and the incredible fluidity of employment that typifies the current generational thinking, is it the 'J' or the 'communal service' that maintains its relevance? I am not at all opposed to considering people working in the general community as 'Jewish communal professionals,' but I do think we need to have some discussion about what that means. This is not simply a 'yes' or 'no' question; it goes to the essence of who we are and what we are.

Sally Weber: Each of our Jewish agencies that claims roots in Jewish values and ethics should have a committee that looks at the core part of their mission to continue to define and redefine what it means to be a social service agency in changing times.

The final question for me, and an ongoing one in our field, is, What is the value of a Jewish communal service degree? What's expected? As my colleague asked, "What <u>are</u> you walking into the room with as a Jewish communal pofessional?"

JOHN FISHEL

Let me frame the questions that were posed in the context of my career. In preparation for today, I thought about how dramatically the field has changed and how the expectations from a Federation standpoint for me as a Jewish communal professional have changed. I have been fortunate to have had a reasonably varied career that began in public welfare, which led me to decide that I too would get an MSW degree. I struggled with what I was going to do with that degree. Unlike Sally, I did not want to be a clinician; it was not something that I was particularly skilled at, and I did not feel it would be the best use of the education that I was

going to pursue at the University of Michigan. I took a concentration in Administration and Policy, and now looking back, 35 years later, our aspirations were almost laughable. Coming out with this degree, my expectation and that of most of my fellow graduates were that we were going to be senior public policy professionals at what was then called the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Degrees in the area of public administration were oriented that way. I worked as a planner in health care in the state of Ohio; it was more community organization than it was planning. It seemed lacking in anything that was content driven, and it didn't really motivate me.

It was almost by chance that I ended up in a career in Jewish communal service. I wasn't happy in public administration; the then-director of the Federation in Cleveland (where I'm from), Henry Zucker, was a friend of the family and quite a figure in the Jewish community there. I remember as a young man, he shook his head when I told him I didn't know what I wanted to be. He told me that I might enjoy Jewish Federation work.

Unlike many of my colleagues today, I did not come from a particularly "Jewish" background. I went to synagogue, and I had all of the Hebrew school training, but it wasn't the central motivator when I went to Philadelphia to interview at the Federation. There was an extraordinary professional, unique in fact, who worked there by the name of Charlie Miller. Charlie was the first professional planner in the Federation world, virtually creating the planning profession in the Federation system. He had a unique personality, probably one of the most volatile people I had a chance to work with. But he was an extraordinary mentor, and made an enormous impact on me because his own background that, while very Jewish, came out of almost a socialist track—one that brought many Jewish communal workers into the profession in the '30s, '40s, and '50s.

That experience as a young communal worker in the Planning Department at the Federation in Philadelphia was formative in terms of organizational relationships, the analytic skills that were necessary to think about communal needs, the interpersonal skills that were necessary to engage professional colleagues, and the opportunity to observe firsthand some very sophisticated professional colleagues in the Federation's affiliated agency system. I was able to look at different styles and skills—political skills, technical skills, process-driven skills—and to observe the relationship of professionals to the lay leadership. This was at a time when, as was referenced earlier, most professionals were still serving in more of a secretarial/administrative support capacity, rather than being leaders themselves.

After about a year and a half, I had an extraordinary opportunity to go off and hone an area of skills that I believe are important in Federation work, and that sadly has not been offered to many Federation professionals over the last number of years: working in a direct service agency. I had an opportunity to work with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) at a time when Soviet Jews were leaving the then-USSR in large numbers. I was able to direct a very small social service agency where clinical skills were important. But it was really the interpersonal and technical skills related to legal aspects of immigration and resettlement in the United States that took center stage. Also, this experience helped hone my management skills because as the number of refugees grew, so too did the organization. Issues related to management, budget monitoring, legal negotiations,

etc., became increasingly important, and the aspect of integrating the newcomers into the Jewish community both deepened my own interest in the Judaic dimension of the work and expanded the role I played.

The next step took me to Montreal (as planning director of the Federation), where after six or seven years I had another fortuitous opportunity (executive director) just as I was looking for something more challenging, which would give me different skills. Sally used the word "entrepreneur"; it became obvious to me over time that, to grow, you have to be entrepreneurial and take risks. I took an enormous risk when I accepted the job in Montreal because large numbers of Jews were leaving the city due to the political situation there. As the planner, I came into a very complex situation that was highlighted by the interplay between the public sector and the communal sector. Canada has a highly socialized service system, and in Quebec all the health care systems had become nationalized. Jewish Family Service became a public agency, yet still with a Jewish board and Jewish staff. That created an interesting dynamic between the sectarian and nonsectarian work that we did, between the public and private sector.

While we were advocating and lobbying on behalf of Jewish communal organizations to assure adequate funding, we were also observing dramatic changes in Jewish communal life as it became more pluralistic. In Montreal, 30% of the community were Sephardim, primarily from Morocco and, for all intents and purposes, had created a parallel communal system. Their own institutions regarded themselves as distinct, which they were, and my anthropological training came in handy in terms of not being ethnocentric in my dealings with them. You could not apply a solution appropriate for one sector of the community to someone with a very different background, even though you shared a common faith. Rather it was important to hone one's listening skills and respect for pluralism to create a community, a unified community.

I arrived in Los Angeles 17 years ago, and as I look back I can see how dramatically things have changed in terms of the skills needed as the director of the Federation. If you're working in a Jewish Family Service or in a Jewish Community Center or certainly in a Jewish Federation, you need to recognize that every community is distinct—each community has its own dynamic and culture—and you need to recognize that solutions that work in some communities do not necessarily work in others. You have to be able to judge and analyze a problem in its own terms and understand the context in which you're working.

Los Angeles obviously is among the most pluralistic communities in the United States. The hierarchical decision-making structure of many Jewish communities is not the reality here. It is horizontal in terms of how it is organized. It is impossible here to operate in the command/control model, as some Federations do. Fortunately I arrived with no expectations of what was possible, and while it was an adjustment, over time I began to realize that, to get things done, you needed an interesting combination of personal skills and technical skills.

Let me say a word about the technical skills because Sally referenced the MBA degree. I never believed I would be faced with the types of challenges I have had to deal with here over the last 17 years, and even in Montreal. I had to call on skills that I did not learn in any academic setting, other than the ability to listen, analyze, and think in a critical fashion. But it was daunting to be faced with major budget crises like in the early 1990s, to have to look at how to cut

millions of dollars out of a budget in a 6-week period because without doing so, you were heading toward insolvency. I don't believe it was merely an exercise in balancing a budget; it was an exercise really of survival, trying to define a consensus where none existed. It called for a combination of personal skills to try to understand what other people felt was important, coupled with budgetary skills that were required to assure that the organization remained in business and whole, so it could accomplish its core objectives of providing services to the community.

In retrospect, I know that some decisions were good ones and some were not. It was a difficult time for both lay and professional leaders, but it also proved dramatically that no one person can try to be responsible for a complex organization. Team building, delegation of authority, holding people accountable, having strong colleague relationships—all became absolutely vital. Without these things I truly do not believe that, in the early 1990s or in the subsequent years, we would have had a strong, viable organization. We have had many challenges—challenges dealing with organizational autonomy, trying to convince people to work together, trying to define who are the constituencies of the Federation. What does structure mean in terms of the practical realities of empowering people and giving them sufficient resources to do the job? Can one risk a decentralized approach in decision making?

Clearly, the lay relationships are important. I have been very fortunate, both personally and professionally, to have worked with some extraordinary, very successful, talented lay leaders. I am of the opinion that the best Jewish communal organizations are the ones where there is a true balance between professionals and lay leaders. There is a healthy dynamic tension that always exists in any Jewish communal organization around this, but I think that the clarity in role responsibilities and holding each accountable to the other are essential for strong vital organization.

I mentioned the daunting nature of the problems that come up as the executive of the Federation, and I sometimes step back and say to myself, "Gee, is this really what I intended to be doing when I went into this field?" Whether it is dealing with pensions, issues about insurance, issues about facilities, issues about budget, on and on and on. And I haven't even referenced Israel. It shows you how complex these jobs have become, when you need to look not only at things domestically but internationally as well. For example, in a discussion today with a number of Israelis concerning Israel Independence Day this year, there was a controversy over the nature of the celebration. I was sitting with a colleague and a number of Israelis, and someone got very hot under the collar said, "You're a non-Zionist; you're an anti-Zionist." I was really quite stunned by the interaction, but then I realized this response was coming from emotion and not intellect. This showed the necessity and challenge of constantly working as a Jewish communal professional and trying to build a Jewish people. We need to recognize the diversity, recognize that people have different images of what it means to be Jewish. Am I Israeli? Am I Jewish? Am I an American Jew? Persian Jew? Russian Jew?

John Fishel: The best Jewish communal organizations are the ones where there is a true balance between professionals and lay leaders.

We are forging a new reality; the challenge for us in Los Angeles will be to define our community in the future. What skills will professionals need to deal with diversity? Will they be the same skills that were called upon during the previous two or three decades?

DAVID LEVY

The last couple of questions you asked, John, were interesting, because I was asked to speak using Hillel as a case example for a lot of these changes that have been happening. What is really wonderful about Hillel is that it is the next generation. What Hillel does and what I have seen over my last 5 years with the organization foreshadow what the community might be like, what the needs are, and some of the changes that are happening.

Let me share two trends that I see in Hillel, some of the ramifications of those trends, and some observations that I think show the changing nature of the Jewish communal professional.

The first is that the Hillel director, for many years, has been thought of as a rabbi; that was the standard. Perhaps as recently as ten years ago, 80% of Hillel directors were rabbis. Now, that is no longer the standard. It's flipped, and now 80% are likely not to be rabbis. We currently have one opening in our regional system, and the two past directors who were rabbis recommended to the search committee that they expand their scope to include nonrabbis.

This relates to the changing nature of what it means to be a director of a Jewish organization with a distinctively Jewish mission. The role of the executive director in Hillel is highly complex. With the roles of manager, fundraiser, and board development—all those are part of what an executive director must deal with now—some rabbis may not be trained for that.

Jewish education is still a very important facet of Hillel work, however. The question then is, How do you build that into your staff, and what does it mean when building a staff when that executive director position is no longer filled by a traditional rabbinic figure?

Before we get to the second trend, I want to touch on the training. If we recognize that the director may not be a rabbi, but rather a Jewish communal professional, and that rabbis might serve Hillels in different roles, that affects how we train both rabbis and communal professionals. The training of each needs to expand to encompass both management and the conveying of Jewish values.

Another trend that I am just beginning to see with Hillel is that the skill level that we are looking for in young professionals is probably higher than it was in the past. We use a lot more students and interns for peer engagement, rather than young professionals. Part of that is due to the Jewish Campus Service Corps program, which no longer exists (see article by Alicia Cohen in this issue). A lot of formerly entry-level work is now being done by students who are mentored by professionals with a lot more experience. We are looking for our new professionals to be able to mentor, coach, and inspire.

Interestingly enough, I started at Cedars-Sinai a week ago, and I see that same trend there. There are fewer entry-level positions and what are labeled as entry level have higher skill sets required for them. How, then, are we training young professionals?

This also accounts for a lot of movement among young people. Hillel staffs are now younger than most other Jewish nonprofit staffs, and there is a lot of movement between organizations, from Federations to Hillel to JCCs to synagogues. I think traditionally, each area of practice had its own training or scholarship programs, and there was little interplay between them. With young people

moving more often, we need to recognize that there are low barriers between organizations and look at how we can collaborate to train young professionals.

The other thing that we look for in Hillel professionals and executive director is the ability to provide vision to the organization. There is a transition here, as well, because when Marla and I were starting out, we were taught that vision was the responsibility of the board, not the staff. Now, more and more, staff are looked to for that vision.

A couple of observations. I read the words we were asked to address today, "expectations for professionals," as "expectations of professionals." This generation looks for personal fulfillment from the job. It may sound selfish, but I will tell you from working with these young people that it's not selfish. It is really just how their lives are organized, which is a little different than how it was done in the past. Organizations need to respond to that in a positive way. What these young professionals are saying is that they want to grow as a person, as a professional, and as a Jew, and that growth involves their work in the organization. So how can we meet those needs?

The young generation looks at paying their dues differently than we used to look at it. They want to sit at the table their first day in. Now we might interpret that as funny, but some of these young professionals are fearless. They don't necessarily want to be decision makers right away, but they do want to make sure they get their voices heard, that they have a say.

We cannot assume anything about this generation. We cannot assume that new professionals have been to Israel or have a connection to Israel or that the connection is the same as ours. We say that half the Jewish students on campuses were born into a family where only one parent was born Jewish. This changes a lot of things—growing up in multiethnic families and how members of those families feel about intermarriage and Israel, which have been core values in our community. We have to begin to look at the way we organize our community from the lens of these new young professionals.

In general, how we organize our community has changed. Most people, when they check off their affiliation, will say "Just Jewish"; more will say that than all the other options. Young people do not necessarily organize themselves as Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, or join a traditional-type synagogue. When we organize the community, we have to realize some of the assumptions we make no longer exist in the community out there, and that is also reflected in our young professionals.

David Levy: The young generation looks at paying their dues differently than we used to look at it. They want to sit at the table their first day in.

Let me address technology, which has really changed. When I was growing up, and when most of us in the room were growing up, there were no phone machines. If you wanted to call someone who was not home, you had to call back. Now if you can't speak to someone right away or get a response to an e-mail or text right away, you're shocked! When I started in the field, some organizations didn't have fax machines (and I'm not that old); we had to prepare for meetings weeks in advance. Now you can prepare a day in advance, and with a Blackberry, you can sometimes prepare on your way to the meeting.

Time is different to this generation, and advance notice is different to this generation. The idea of multitasking is also different. I was at a meeting with all the Hillel directors, and every single person in the room was on their Blackberry. First it irked me, but multitasking is part of this generation. People were researching

questions and getting answers in real time, and it was actually very efficient, just a different way of doing business. I think that speaks volumes to how effectively we can do our jobs. We have to think about how we use that technology and how it is going to affect us.

My final observation, in terms of Hillel or other organizations, is that the best way to recruit for an organization is one person talking to another person, preferably face to face or on the phone. With all these changes going on, we have to continue to build that into all that we do.

MARLA EGLASH ABRAHAM

Let me share a couple of words in synthesis and then we will open up to questions. One of the things that I was thinking about while the panelists were speaking was the notion of vision-setters and the opportunities available to us in this day and age for shared and facilitative leadership. When we can create vision together, the lay-professional partnership is fuller. I think and hope my lay leadership expects me to challenge them, and I expect them to and they do challenge me. I hope that we make each other better and not just "throw the football and pass it down the line." The other theme is those professionals who said they fell into Jewish communal service and then found their calling versus those of us who came to school when Jewish communal service programs existed because we had the calling. There's an intentionality of pursuit that has shaped how we see ourselves as leaders as opposed to finding ourselves in a place.

Another change that affects us is what consensus means. Most of us in the room were schooled that building consensus is what we need to do—a very process-driven process. Most of us still believe that group process makes the outcome, the product, better, but David's comments about time and Blackberrys change the way we get to that consensus. And finally, we couldn't think of ourselves as specialists; we had to think about ourselves as generalists. The boundaries became so porous that we had to expand outside our comfort zones.

And with that, let's open it to questions.

Question: There is concern that the younger generation of professionals do not exhibit the commitment to serving the Jewish community, "the burn," that seemed to motivate previous generations.

Marla Eglash Abraham: When we use the word "calling," we are talking about the burn. Passion, the calling, comes from that place. I don't think we're speaking a different language; I think we're translating in a different way. As an example, you just used Yiddish in your question. I did not grow up in a house where Yiddish was spoken, and if you ask, "What kind of yid is she?," well I am a born and raised Jew from Hollywood CA, Temple Israel of Hollywood, who didn't know Hebrew was in a *siddur* until I was an adult. Here I am, though, burning, burning, let me tell you.

Sally Weber: And I would certainly define myself as someone who found my calling. I grew up in an anti-Jewish, anti-Zionist home; we celebrated Christmas and Easter. When I met my late husband, we were on our third date and he took me to Temple Beth Abraham in Oakland to hear this rabbi, Harold Shulweis, and I thought, "This guy is interesting… but he's taking me to a synagogue?!" I don't think I'd been to a synagogue since I was 13 years old, and I think it was on a Girl Scout trip. People come to this field in a variety of ways, and many

discover their calling along the way. Several years ago I got involved with the Whizin Institute on the Jewish Family. We had all taken on qualitative research projects and mine was directing the San Fernando Valley counseling office of JFS. I was really interested in why the social workers were working there. I interviewed a number of them at great length, and several of them said that it just seemed like a good job. One woman came to me a week after our interview and said, "Look what I'm wearing; it's a Star of David. I've never worn it before, but our conversation made me realize why I'm working here." I think we have to be careful with our criteria, or else we can miss some quality Jewish professionals.

John Fishel: I would add that no one will stay in the profession of Jewish communal service unless they have what you refer to as "the burn." Sometimes it's just a professional opportunity, but I truly believe that anyone who does this on a protracted basis, truly has to care, has that burn. No matter how minute or stupefying the details, there is something overarching. Those experiences that have kept me doing what I've done for 35 years now are things that were truly emotional, where I connected to something broader than myself. It made me realize that no matter how awful I would feel sometimes due to the complexity of organizations, there was a greater purpose that was necessary to accomplish.

David Levy: When I was at Hillel, I looked for that passion and commitment you referenced, but I think a challenge that we have in our community is that that passion may not be about Israel or in a synagogue. Young people are especially creative, and there are different ways of expressing passions. We'd miss a lot if we did not open or expand that definition.

Question: As a Millennial I'm curious as to how the organized Jewish community is working to deal with those who have different expectations of work, personal life, etc., and how can we come to a compromise that will work for both groups?

Sally Weber: We talk about this a lot at JFS. We have field instructors who recently did workshops on understanding the Millennial generation. We spend time on that, as well as what it means to be a Baby Boomer or a pre-Baby Boomer, because we all bring our own things to the field. It's important to keep discussing this dynamic because it affects management, it affects supervision, how you team build, how you collaborate with others in community. We need to understand that there are different ways of interrelating, and if you have a reaction, you have to stop and take a look at what's happening. I'm going to go back to process because I'm a social worker. I think those discussions are crucially important to keep an agency vibrant.

David Levy: I think that this is THE question. That's what we need to do as a community to keep evolving. I remember asking that same question after I graduated and a couple of us young professional workers were going to take over the community. The two things I think about as a leader in the community are (1) know what the community stands for and (2) listen to our constituency. If we can do that, we can hear the answers.

MARLA EGLASH ABRAHAM

Let me close this session with a blessing: Praised are You Adonai, our God, Ruler of the Universe, who sanctifies us through Mitzvot and who commands us to engage in the needs of the community. And let us say Amen.